
POETIC EPISTLE

A

P O E T I C E P I S T L E

T O



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C A L C U T T A:

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M DCC LXXXV.

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TO



CALUTAT:

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A N

E P I S T L E

T O

CAN you, whose worth these vent'rous thoughts inspire,
Whose sense I rev'rence and whose charms admire,
From those gay scenes which claim a fair ones care,
To dull Reflection one short moment spare;
To these unsmooth'd but honest lines attend;
And learn to know the Flatt'rer from the Friend?

Your blooming age, your face divinely fair,
Your smile unpractis'd and attractive air;
Your graceful form, to just proportion true,
With rapture some, and some with envy view:

What stoic breast would not such beauties move
Should reason guide them and good taste improve!

Yet REASON's rules what Ladies now confess?

And Taste alas! is only known in dress.

In you I fondly wish them both combin'd,

O let them form your manners and your mind!

Your early mind now dawning to receive

Those lasting tints that gay examples give,

By Folly gloom'd, or bright with Reason's ray,

With clouds or sunshine mark your future day.

'Twas thus Jove's son with anxious thought survey'd

Life's various roads before his view display'd;

Whilst how to chuse disturb'd his dubious breast

Two heav'nly forms the musing youth address'd,

This counsel'd Fame, and that to Pleasure press'd

DIVINE ALCIDES nobly chose the best!

In Virtue's rugged path relentless trod,

First rose a Hero, and now shines a God.

And you a Goddess not less bright shall shine

Whilst bending suitors own your power divine,

If you like him shun Folly's specious train
And point your even course tow'rds Virtue's sacred fane.

For now, should wayward Nymphs bewilder'd stray
No heav'nly guide descends to point the way,
No friendly hand the needful clew supplies,
At each false step loud taunts and scoffs arise:
What then shall shape th' unknowing maiden's thought,
Shall models just from social life be brought?
In vain for such we cast our eyes around,
In social life no perfect forms are found:
Some darling folly ever foremost thrust
Or claims compassion or excites disgust.
Yet since each Nymph some traits peculiar grace,
Flow from her tongue, or dignify her face;
Her actions rule, her sprightly thoughts supply,
Trip in her step or sparkle in her eye;
O! be it yours with judgment to select,
To chuse their virtues but their faults reject.

Come

Come, let us move 'mongst this fantastic throng
 And gather lessons as we range along,
 With Candor's eye survey each gentle dame,
 Rejoic'd to praise them but averse to blame.

To FLAVIA's fame more perfect strains belong,
 Her modest worth demands a nobler song,
 Tho' no vain thoughts in frantic whims confest
 Disturb the equal tenor of her breast,
 To rule with Fashion's superficial sway,
 The gaze of Fools and pageant of the day;
 To worth like hers ev'n wond'ring Envy pays
 The grateful tribute of unwilling praise;
 Allows her virtues gentle and refin'd
 For wedded life's sincerer joys design'd,
 By sordid gain to fulsome love unmov'd,
 She chose the favor'd youth her heart approv'd,

To

To such a match with rapture Hymen came,
 And bade his torch display a steady flame;
 A flame that bright thro' ev'ry age shall burn
 'Till time resigns her to the silent urn,
 Her fair example then in verse shall last,
 Instruct the future as it charm'd the past.

SEE next a throng with various gifts endow'd,
 The gay, the dull, the gentle and the proud;
 All who in Wedlocks harbor safely ride,
 Or who to get there, court the wind and tide,
 And lest th' important enterprize should fail,
 Industrious trim their canvases to the gale.
 Here in a bosom Love in ambush lies,
 There boldly darts his arrows from the eyes,
 Seen near the ankle when she lightly trips,
 Or breathing heav'nly fragrance from the lips;
 To no fix'd region is the God confin'd,
 But ev'ry part to prove his power design'd;
 Tho' in ripe cheeks his ardent spirit glows,
 Yet heaving sighs his equal warmth disclose,

In flowing ringlets once he lov'd to play,
 But now from grace disgusted turns away:
 From hence the wanton power his weapons tries,
 And many a vagrant shaft at random flies,
 Unless more prudent when he bends his bow
 Where numerous lacks display a glittering show,
 And the proud master mounted on his hoards
 A surer aim and wealthier prize affords.
 Alluring conquests! but when once complete
 What oft ensues, it grieves me to relate;
 See many a pair whom love disgusted flies
 With torch inverted and disdainful eyes,
 His Godhead slighted and his power disclaim'd,
 His shrines neglected and his rites profan'd;
 Where health with ails in irksome bands engage
 Or rosy youth is link'd with stooping age;
 Their motives odious and their fate acurs'd
 Of Indias, sad *Delinquents* these the worst.

WELL sung the bard who thus your aims defin'd,
 "When fortune favors still the fair are kind?"

Yet wealth alone no certain bliss secures,
 Tho' many a nymph the gay temptation lures,
 Who pensive waking from her golden dream
 Feels anxious thoughts that wealth could never tame,
 Which fashion curbs not, reason scarce restrains,
 In restless whims disclos'd their aukward pains.
 Now view her spouse the costly Mansion rear;
 Nor peace nor calm content inhabit there;
 The wretched mistress of the splendid dome
 Nor ease can find abroad nor rest at home;
 That something which still rolls the languid eye,
 Wastes the pâle cheek and prompts the pensive sigh,
 Still gathering on with ill succeeding ill
 Baffles the husband's cares, the doctor's skill,
 Till no resource can sooth the hapless pair
 Save the calm solace of their native air;
 " See—— and—— from this curs'd climate steer,
 " Why lose we Life's sincerest season here.
 Tow'rd's England next they hoist th' impatient sail
 But still the same sad irksome cares prevail :

Tho'

Tho' at St. Stephens he a man of note!
 Displays his dear bought, senseless, silent vote;
 And she where diamonds vie with rival rays
 The proudest dims with her superior blaze,
 The bliss they seek for adverse fate denies,
 Still from their grasp the fond delusion flies;
 That bliss which wealth and show could ne'er impart
 But dwells alone in each well govern'd heart,
 Which tho' to purchase, LACKS have useless prov'd,
 FLAVIA found gratis in the man she lov'd.

O'ER all these sketches cast your curious eye,
 Their whimsied forms by Truth's proportions try
 What's lovely, copy, what's amiss, disdain,
 From all their frailties due experience gain;
 Take SYLVIA's grace, reject her artful tears,
 Take BELLA's smartness, but reject her sneers;
 Reject her cloudy frown contemptuous rais'd
 When vex'd to hear a rival beauty prais'd.

Should

Should artful bloom attract your wond'ring eyes,
 Think what deceit beneath the surface lies,
 The skin indignant of th' offensive load
 Reveals its hate in freckles brown and broad.
 Old Beldams thus, their ancient fronts renew:
 First cleanse each wrinkle of its greasy hue,
 Stub by the stumps rank tufts of bristly hair,
 Then spread o'er all a surface smooth and clear;
 Like some old house with tawdry toil repair'd,
 With fair chunam and ruddy brickdust smear'd;
 Proud of its plaister'd front the fabric stands,
 And falsely seems the work of modern hands,
 Yet as the transient mortar falls away,
 More batter'd shows the crazy walls decay.
 Prais'd be the nymph, whose dext'rous art can find
 One sly contrivance more to cheat mankind;
 In Fashion's fair accoutrements array'd,
 To march secure thro' life in masquerade:
 Paints, patches, plumpers, pads, have all been try'd,
 And rumps of various substances apply'd;

False hair, false eyebrows arch'd of false hue,
 And moles describ'd with brown and veins with blue
 To nobler efforts many a dame's inclin'd,
 To patch the temper and to mask the mind.
 Behind such shelter when concealed they lie
 With treacherous force their amorous weapons fly.
 Then let the man whose vent'rous soul shall dare
 To tempt the dangers of deceitful war,
 When love or lucre gains the field for life,
 Strip off the ambush and get out the wife;
 A frigid carcase, shapeless, pale, and thin,
 Nor beauty found without, nor sense within!

BUT left, this strain my gentle fair offend,
 This irksome subject here shall have an end,
 And pleas'd the sex's praises to rehearse
 To nobler themes I turn th' obedient verse.
 Greece, her bold sons adventurous deeds, displays
 In lasting trophies of immortal praise;
 And

And Jason's crew, their dang'rous voyage o'er,
 Like Gods were welcom'd to the wondering shore;
 Their ship aloft its radiant passage steers,
 Rais'd by the learned 'midst the shining spheres,
 Where charg'd with glowing orbs a heav'nly load
 Thro' southern seas it points the dubious road.
 Shall one short voyage gain superior fame,
 And Britain's daughters no distinction claim?
 Whose daring spirit mightier danger braves,
 From rocks, from fire, the climates, and the waves!
 Nor gold *their* object but a nobler aim
 Warms the chaste bosom of each gen'rous dame;
 With Beauty's powers to sooth an exil'd face,
 Prejudg'd to crimes and sentenced to disgrace;
 Blustering at wrongs, yet fether'd to submit,
 Of Fox the ruin, but the prey of PIT:
 An envy'd, sun-burnt, tame, submissive train,
 The senate's hate, altho' the nation's gain,
 Whom most to teize their haughty masters strive
 And impious oaths impose, and plagues contrive.

Proceed

Proceed wise SOLONS! still be understood
 To mean no purpose but the public good;
 Frame BILLS on BILLS, and prove us more and more
 The abject victims of a statesman's pow'r,
 Till some vile CLAUSE forbids us to receive
 That last, best *nuzzir* heav'n to Adam gave;
 Of love, fame, fortune, health, and friends bereft,
 And scarce one freedom, or one comfort left!
 But hear ye BOARDS, and ye COMMITTEES hear!
 Ye petty tyrants! witness how we swear:
 Sooner shall India's plains be cloath'd in snow,
 And thro' CALCUTTA wholesome breezes blow,
 Sircars large sums at low per centage lend,
 And P——style M^c——n——sh his *worthy friend*;
 Sooner shall beaux in drudging business strive,
 And belles forsake their evenings dusty drive,
 Than we bold Britons will resign the fair,
 That latest object of an Indian's pray'r;
 Which oft when age exhausted seeks repose,
 Indulgent heaven to ease his toil bestows,

“ To sooth his cares and free from noise and strife,

“ Conduct him gently to the verge of life:”

Love here shall still his sacred rights maintain,

Free as the air, and boundless as the main;

To guard those rights be still our generous parts,

Arms in our hands, and courage in our hearts;

In his just cause his Freedom's flag unfurl,

Dread o'er the eastern as the western world.

LEST some pert fool mistake my true intent,

And give to meanings what was never meant,

I curb the headstrong progress of my lay

From dubious themes that lead a dang'rous way;

Be CYNTHIA's praise (the beautiful and young)

The pleasing subject of my varying song:

“ She blest with temper whose unclouded ray

“ Can make to-morrow cheerful as to day;”

Polite the serious as the gay to please,

With freedom, dignity, decorum, ease;

Generous

Generous each fair one's virtues to commend,
 Or show the spirit injur'd to defend;
 Transcendent goodness! which no envy spites,
 No hatred injures, and no malice bites.
 Be she the friendly Cynosure to guide
 Your devious course through Life's uncertain tide.
 So shall your beautiful bark triumphant sail,
 Shun Folly's rocks, and Passion's frantic gale,
 Till safely moor'd in that mysterious bay,
 Where each fair squadron steers its urgent way.
 You prove the blessings of domestic life,
 Unchang'd with pale regret, unfour'd with cank'ring strife.
 Your friends with joy remark this fair presage,
 An early fondness for the classic page;
 Where liberal truths in polish'd verse are taught,
 And tuneful numbers harmonize the thought;
 Where artful lines the matron's aims fulfil,
 Fix unperceiv'd and regulate the will.
 Still the bright scenes of lightsome Pindus trace,
 And rise superior to that drowsy race.

Whom

Whom dusky fog from Spleen's dark cavern shades,
 Chagrin affails, and irksome sloth invades;
 Tho' Fortune courts them, pompous scenes employ,
 Wealth they ne'er taste and splendour ne'er enjoy;
 In vain for ease to Fashion's fanes they fly,
 Nor dance, nor song, the wish'd relief supply;
 The throng'd assembly and the sumptuous feast;
 Still ENVY haunts, a scorn'd but constant guest;
 Her noxious breath diffusing general gloom
 O'er the bright circle, and th'illumin'd room:
 Tho' Beauty's mask her haggard form conceals,
 Her changeless temper all the fiend reveals,
 Her baleful influence Freedom's smile destroys,
 Dims Fancy's beam, and saddens Friendship's joys;
 Yet round her chair see well dress'd witlings press,
 Grave men endure her and chaste nymphs caress,
 Whilst scandal waits in various habits dress'd
 The tasteless story, or the pointless jest;
 From side to side the vacant laugh resounds
 Or nod oblique, some maid's fair honor wounds.

What

What boundless praises shall those deeds demand,
 That drive this hated monster from the land;
 Would you with generous thirst of bright applause,
 Step forth the champion of the public cause,
 Minerva like, immortal arms to wield,
 Reason should lend a spear and Taste a shield;
 Chaste Honor's robe should guard your spotless breast,
 And Truth's refulgence form your beaming crest:
 More charming beauties should this dress impart
 Than ——'s gauze, or ——'s greasy art.
 In Fancy's eye I view you range around,
 Pale ENVY's powers to battle and confound,
 Touch'd with your lance the beldam stands confest,
 Her mask exploded, and her voice suppress'd;
 Pleas'd from her vile dominion to escape,
 Each fair one views her in her native shape,
 With full perception dreads her dangerous harms,
 More dire than age, the canker of their charms;
 Now loud applause confirms your just intent,
 See the pale wretch in Spleen's dark cavern pent;

No more her breath pollutes the genial source
 Of artless mirth, and social intercourse,
 But brighter tints in — 's complexion glow,
 From BELLA's tongue more pleasing accents flow ;
 A lovelier aspect CURIA's features wear,
 In FULVIA's shape more graceful turns appear ;
 Each gentle breast with milder virtues warm'd,
 Wit's shafts despised, and Scandal's edge disarm'd,
 Now Reason's beams to Passion's storms ensue,
 The mental golden age we hail, restor'd by you !



F I N I S.

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 Of artless mirth, and social intercourse,
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 The mental golden age we hail, restor'd by you!



Pale Cery's power, —
 Touch'd with your lance the belian stands confest,
 Her mask exposed, and her voice suppress'd;
 Pleas'd from her gulf dominion to escape,
 Each fair one views her in her native shape,
 With full perception dread her dangerous harms;
 More distant now the canker of their charms;
 Now loud appeal to your just merit;
 And the pale —'s dark cavern pent,

